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THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Ḑlōir do Dhia aḡ rḡa hárduib, aḡur ríodcáin aip an ncalam deaḡtōil do na dáoinib.

LXXXII. 14.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY, AT 9, UPPER SACKVILLE-STREET, DUBLIN.

Vol. III.—No. 33.

SEPTEMBER, 1854.

{ Annual Subscription, 3s. 6d.
Payable in Advance.

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IMMUTABILITY OF THE CHURCH OF ROME— TRADITION AND DEVELOPMENT. No. II.

IN our last Number we made some remarks upon the two antagonistic theories which the Church of Rome maintains respecting the Rule of Faith, and which we designated respectively as the Tridentine or tradition theory, and the modern or Development theory. We proceed now to complete the brief sketch which our space allows us to give of this most important question.

In the progress of the controversy between the Reformed Churches and the Church of Rome, the advocates of the latter found themselves perpetually embarrassed by the rigid limits within which the definitions of the Council of Trent confined them; and the absolute necessity of some more enlarged basis of dogmatic teaching forced itself upon their attention. To meet this necessity, the celebrated Möhler, Professor of Theology in the Roman Catholic University at Munich, revived the doctrine of development, which Petavius's work, notwithstanding its real design, had, doubtless, brought into disrepute. The spirit of the age was favourable to its revival. Among the so-called philosophical writers, especially of the sceptical school, it became fashionable to talk of and speculate upon the notion of a gradual and progressive development of the human race. This theory was applied, amongst other things, to prove that Christianity itself was a mere natural development of the human mind; sufficiently well adapted, indeed, to the circumstances of the world when it first appeared, but now obsolete and unsuited to the present advanced stage of man's history. A theory so complimentary to human nature could scarce fail to be popular. And, accordingly, it appeared to Möhler that it might, when properly modified, be made to render good service to the cause of Rome. The result of his labours, which he executed with consummate skill, is contained in his celebrated work, entitled "Symbolism." The main idea of this elaborate defence of the Church of Rome is the following:—That the Christian revelation was originally incomplete—an undeveloped germ, confided to the fostering care of the Church—a mere nucleus of divine truth, which was to be acted on by the growing reason and increasing wants of men; and so to be gradually unfolded into distinct propositions and explicit dogmas of belief. Möhler tells us that "the theory of the conformity of the Church's doctrine to that of Scripture [the theory, in part, of Trent], is applicable only to the substance, and not to the form." "The original doctrine expanded itself, in proportion as the human mind evolved it, in a much altered form; it remained the original, and yet it did not." "The faith is ever old and ever new." This acute writer was fully aware of the difficulty of reconciling this theory with the Tridentine notion of a fixed and invariable tradition. This difficulty he endeavours to get over by obscure and vague assertions. He resolves tradition into development. With him the former is not a fixed and definite external reality, but the living word energizing in the hearts of the faithful. It loses its objective and historical character, and becomes invested with purely subjective attributes. In fact, as it has been well remarked by Dr. Wordsworth, "in Dr. Möhler's hands, tradition loses all its *traditive* character; and, instead of practising the strict fidelity of the historian, it luxuriates in all the exuberant imaginativeness of the poet."

Still the principle of development, as advocated by Möhler, was too valuable and necessary to be given up. Accordingly, it has been recognised, and applied to some extent, by one of the most learned and elaborate theological writers of the present day, Perrone, Professor of Theology in the Jesuit College at Rome. If Möhler was obscure and ambiguous upon the subject, Perrone is still more oracular. Whilst, on the one hand, he strives to uphold the tradition theory of the middle ages, he, on the other, is equally unwilling to forego the advantages to be derived from the more modern doctrine of development. Hence, as might be expected from the attempt to reconcile conflicting systems, he involves his Church in an inextricable web of inconsistencies. These we need not now stop to expose, and we shall content ourselves with the following extract from the edition of his "Prælect. Theolog.," published in 1842, to which subsequent events attach some degree of interest:—

"Since the objection, that the Church (of Rome) by her definition has added new articles to the creeds, has been incessantly urged against her by Protestants, among whom Newman holds a distinguished place—who, in his work on Romanism, upbraids the Catholics with substituting the confession of Pius IV. for the creeds which the Church of England receives—I rejoice to be able to stop the mouths of our adversaries with the profound theory of the illustrious Möhler."

The distinguished Anglican, of whom the Roman professor speaks in the passage just quoted, has since, as the world knows, joined his ranks, and signalized his conversion by the publication of a work which has far eclipsed, at least in notoriety, that of Möhler. Dr. Newman, with his wonted inexorable logic, has pushed the theory of development to its extremest consequences. In his remarkable volume, "An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine," he has taken up and elaborately worked out Möhler's idea of the original Christian doctrines, or rather germs of doctrine, being intended by the Divine Founder of Christianity to be subsequently evolved into a variety of new forms and aspects. He labours to prove that such a development was antecedently natural and necessary; and that, as Möhler also took care to notice, the process was conducted under infallible guidance. Dr. Newman saw well that the cause of Rome could not be maintained on the Tridentine ground of *Scripture and tradition*; he was also too acute not to perceive that it could as little be defended by a mixing up of the two opposite principles of tradition and development. Being forced to make an election between the two, he chose the latter, as seeming to offer the more satisfactory explanation of the difficulties of his adopted creed, and rejected the old-fashioned, though more orthodox, notion of apostolical tradition. It has been remarked* that the preface to this work of Dr. Newman's was dated only two days prior to his having been received into the communion of the Church of Rome, so that the book was, so to speak, his passport—his profession of faith. Amongst other strong statements, it contained the assertion that there was "no formal acknowledgment of the doctrine of the Trinity till the fourth century."—p. 167. This was the very assertion which, as we have already remarked, when broached, a century and a half before, by the Calvinist Jurieu, Bossuet had pronounced to be a "horrible libel on Christianity," only possible from the lips of a Socinian." We mean nothing personally offensive to Dr. Newman. He knows, doubtless, how to explain his doctrine so as to escape the fearful censure pronounced by anticipation against it by the great Bishop of Meaux. He also, doubtless, knows how to solve a question in casuistry, which, to more ordinary minds, seems very difficult, if not impossible, to be resolved—viz., to reconcile the principle upon which his whole book is based with that clause in the oath administered to every priest at ordination, which says, "I will never interpret Scripture except according to the *unanimous consent of the Fathers*." The learned and ingenious author feels, we are sure, no difficulty in reconciling this, or any other seemingly hopeless discrepancy. Nothing is impossible to one who could become a convert to the religion of that very Church which, a few years before, he had described in the following portentous terms—"The Church of Rome is crafty, obstinate, wilful, malicious, cruel, unnatural, as

madmen are; or, rather, she may be said to resemble a *demoniac*. She is her real self only in name, and till God vouchsafe to restore her, we must treat her as if she were the Evil One who governs her. And in saying this, I must not be supposed to deny that there is any real excellence in Romanism even as it is, or that any really excellent men are its adherents. Satan ever acts on a system."* And yet why should we feel surprised at the author of this famous book detecting, or, at least, acknowledging no inconsistency between its principles, and those of the Church of Rome? The lynx-eyed inquisitors of the *Congregazione dell' Indice* themselves failed to discover anything objectionable in it. It has not found its way into the *Index Prohibitorius*, that jealous guardian of the orthodoxy of the Church. It would be unjust to the "Essay on Development" to say, merely, that it has escaped censure. It has been lauded to the skies by several of the most influential organs of Roman Catholic opinion both at home and abroad. Thus, for example, in an article in the "Dublin Review"—the authorship of which is usually assigned to no less a personage than Cardinal Wiseman—the Essay and the essayist are spoken of in the following terms:—"The reader must peruse this volume as the description of the process of reasoning by which the author's powerful and well-stored mind was brought to a *full accordance with Catholic truth*."† "Never did convert come to the Church with mind, soul, and heart, more thoroughly made over to her cause, with more complete, hearty, and filial obedience, than this work shows him to have done."‡ "The Catholic system is embraced (in it) with the fervour and simplicity of one trained from infancy in the faith."§ Nay, more, the same illustrious reviewer undertook, in the same periodical, to defend the "Essay" from the attacks made against it by the leading Roman Catholic Review in America, in which it had been denounced as *subversive of the Catholic faith*, and even *Christianity itself*.|| "We have consulted," says the reviewer (Jan., 1847), "as high living authorities on the subject as there are in this country, and they all concur in saying that the Church can propose only what was revealed, and that the *revelation committed to the Church was perfect*." This, as we have seen, was the position maintained by Dr. Wiseman himself, in his Moorfield lectures, delivered in 1836. But some years' reflection, aided, doubtless, by the new lights evolved by "the powerful and well-stored mind" of Dr. Newman, so modified his opinion, that we read in the "Dublin Review" for December, 1847, the following remarkable passage—remarkable, that is to say, as contrasted with the passage, quoted in our last Number, from the "Lectures"—"The essential principle for which we [Roman Catholics] are contending, is no modern invention whatever, but as old as Catholic theology itself. The principle is, that the Church possesses the power, and has, from time to time, exercised it, of *raising into the rank of doctrines of faith* propositions which, previously to her definition, were not such." Here the tradition theory of the Council of Trent is plainly abandoned, and the development theory as plainly substituted for it.

But, it may be said, if the theory of development be so plainly opposed, as you assert, to the doctrine of Trent, why has it found so many advocates in recent times, and those too some of the most distinguished theologians of the Roman Church? We have already indicated the answer to this question, and we shall now state it more fully. When western Christendom was only just emerging from the night of the middle ages, during which the Scriptures had been hidden from the world, and the writings of the Church-Fathers buried in dusty MSS. in monkish libraries, it was easy for the Church of Rome to rest her system upon the asserted authority of Scripture and ancient Tradition. The documents upon which she based her claims were in her own hands, and were hardly accessible to any but such of the privileged class—the clergy—as were able to read them. But for some time previously to the Reformation, through the mighty agency of the press, the Scriptures became more generally diffused, and the works of the

* Newman, "Prophetical Office of the Church," p. 103.

† "Dublin Review," December, 1846, p. 527.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 531.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 534.

|| We refer to "Brownson's Quarterly Review" (Boston), in which Dr. Newman's Essay has been assailed in a series of very able articles.

* By Dr. Wordsworth, "Letters to M. Gondou," p. 10.

earlier Fathers more studied. The more sagacious apologists of Rome—Cardinal Cusanus for instance—perceived that new ground must be taken, and that Scripture and tradition would not suffice, without claiming for the Church an inherent right to constitute, from time to time, as occasion should arise, new doctrines of faith. The Council of Trent, afraid, probably, of sanctioning such a palpable departure from the mediæval system, which it was its great object and business to uphold, ignored the idea of anything like novelty in the Church teaching, and, accordingly, with more boldness than wisdom, stereotyped the good old principle of Scripture and Tradition, with, however, the all-important addition, that both were of equal and co-ordinate authority. The continued progress of Scriptural knowledge and patristic learning, which took place after the Reformation, soon proved that this position of the Tridentine Fathers was untenable, and that if the dogmas of Rome were to be defended at all, the aid of some new auxiliary must be called in. That auxiliary is the theory of development. Those who adopted it were not blind to the formidable objection which it would furnish Protestants with against the alleged immutability of the Church of Rome. But they had no alternative. Inconsistency in the parts of the Papal edifice was judged preferable to its total demolition.

What we have been saying leads us naturally to reflect upon the variations of the *invariable* Church, and that, too, on a question which, of all others, ought to admit of a definite and fixed answer—viz., What is the Rule of Faith? Is it all times unchanged and unchangeable, built upon the immutable basis of Scripture and unbroken apostolic tradition? Or does it depend on an ever-growing process of development, evolving new truths, or competent to evolve them in each succeeding age? On the one side, we have the infallible Council of Trent, with a countless array of the most renowned champions of Rome. On the other, we have an almost equal consensus of authorities, including, at least, one infallible successor of St. Peter (Leo X). Some few, as Möhler and Perrone, have undertaken the hopeless task of reconciling both theories. And some, again, as Cardinal Wiseman, have passed from one to the other, as circumstances rendered it expedient to do so. The magniloquent periods relative to the immutability of the doctrine of the [Roman] Catholic Church, which were so well adapted to the apprehensions and prejudices of a popular auditory, were laid aside when it became necessary to defend the opinions of a long-coveted and highly prized convert; albeit they are opinions which more scrupulous theologians of the same Church have pronounced to be subversive of the Catholic faith and even of Christianity itself.

This is the Church which boasts of unity of faith, and taunts Protestants with their divisions! There are, doubtless, divisions and variations enough amongst us, Protestants, upon minor points. That there should be such differences is part of the trial and discipline to which the visible Church is subjected in this lower world. But our differences do not touch upon the vital question of the Rule of Faith. Upon this, at least, we are all agreed. The *Bible alone*, the *Written Word of God*, is the immutable basis upon which the faith of Protestants is built. This foundation is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The reflection of the mind of Him, with whom is no variability, neither shadow of turning, it continues from age to age, unchanged and unchangeable, the single fixed point amidst the ever-shifting things of time.

Let the Church of Rome then boast, if she will, of her perpetually-preserved apostolical traditions; or, if she prefers it, let her luxuriate in her ever-growing infallible developments. We envy her not. We are content to take our stand on the simple written Word of God. For we believe that this is the rock upon which the faith of the Church shall securely repose, until that blessed consummation shall arrive, when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ.

ST. ROSE OF LIMA.

OUR readers are probably aware that several Roman Catholic newspapers have, from time to time, expressed their dissatisfaction with our periodical, and have endeavoured to dissuade those with whom they have influence from reading it. It will, therefore, be considered very pardonable curiosity on our part, if we have desired to make ourselves acquainted with the literature which does obtain the commendation of the authorities referred to, and if we have tried to find out what is the kind of instruction which they consider adapted to the wants of the people. We have made known some of the results of our studies, in the articles which we have lately published on the life of St. Philomena, and on Father Faber's book, "All for Jesus;" and we intend, in the present article, to give an account of another number of "The Young Christian's Library," which has lately come under our notice. In our former articles we had occasion to remark on the recklessness with which, in these books, things not very probable in themselves were asserted positively, without a shadow of historical evidence; and we were forced to the conclusion, that one of the questions which the authors of these books cared least to be able to answer was, whether the things they wrote were true. We can conceive, however, that some persons may consider this a matter of subordinate importance. They may say, as some have said, "these lives are edifying and

instructive; even if every thing related in them did not happen exactly as it is told, the histories afford useful examples for imitation; if they do not show what the life of a saint actually has been, they show, at least, what it *might* or *ought* to have been, and so they may give the readers help to become saints themselves." Well, we determined to read over one of these books solely from this point of view; not to trouble our heads about the evidence for the stories contained in it, but simply to see whether they were instructive and edifying, and whether the models proposed for our imitation were such as we should wish those for whom we had a regard, to follow. We have selected *Sr. ROSE OF LIMA*, merely because her life was the last number of "The Young Christian's Library," published at the time of our procuring the volume; we believe, however, that she may be taken as a fair specimen of a saint, and that the stories told of her are not very different in kind from those told of the others whose names have been added within the last few hundred years to the Canon. We say within the last few hundred years, because the title of saint was obtained on much easier terms formerly, than now-a-days; every distinguished theological writer whose works are 600 years old, and free from the taint of heresy, is given this "handle to his name"; it is only in modern times that miracles, and voluntary torments, are required from a candidate for the title.

We abridge, from Mr. Duffy's volume, the following summary of the leading facts of St. Rose's life—as to the truth of which we shall not now raise any question. She was born on the 20th April, 1586, of respectable parents, at Lima, in Peru. Her first vocation to a religious life was felt when she was of the age of four years. "As she was playing one day with her little brother, he accidentally threw a quantity of mud on her hair; being neat and orderly in her attire, she was naturally vexed at this, and was on the point of going away in a sullen mood," when her brother appeased her with the excuse which would naturally occur to a child of his years, "my dear sister, do not be angry at this accident, for the curled ringlets of girls are hellish cords which enchain the hearts of men, and miserably drag them into everlasting flames." "Rose hearkened to these words as if they had been pronounced by a holy preacher of God, or as an oracle from heaven. She communed with herself, renounced this world [of which, at that time, she had such profound knowledge] for ever, and, finally, at the age of five years, by an irrevocable vow, consecrated her virgin purity to Almighty God, and solemnly promised to have no other spouse but him alone. We are taught in the fourth commandment that we should honour and obey our parents in all things lawful, and no saint has set us a brighter example of exact obedience to this law than St. Rose of Lima; but there are some things which we cannot do even to please our parents, and St. Rose has taught us the way to act in such perplexity, when it would seem clear that, while God commands one thing our parents command another."

This embarrassment soon arose with poor Rose, for her mother had eleven children to provide for, and would have been very glad if she could have married one of them off her hands; but Rose was determined to carry out the irrevocable vow which she had made, and not only to avoid marriage, but all which might lead to marriage. She was commanded, for instance, by her mother, to wear a band of flowers on her head. She obeyed; but in memory of the Redeemer's crown of thorns, "took the wreath, and fixed it on her head with a large pin, which pierced so deep into her flesh that it could not be drawn out without the aid of a surgeon, and even then with much difficulty. That she might not join in those vain assemblies and visits of which the world is so fond, she was in the habit of rubbing her eyes with pimento—a kind of burning Indian pepper—which rendered her eyes as red as fire, and so painful that she could not bear the light. To her mother, who remonstrated with her, she replied—"It would be much better for me, my dear mother, to be blind all the rest of my life than to be obliged to see the vanities and follies of the world."

Notwithstanding all this she remained so alarmingly beautiful that, "in order to extinguish the flames of passion which burned in the hearts of others, she used every artifice to disfigure herself. She made her face pale and livid with fasting; she washed her hands in hot lime to take the skin off them." Finally, she removed to a little village named Canta, and remained there four years without leaving the house. This last measure, however, was injudiciously adopted, and spoiled the effect of her other proceedings. Possibly it was more than female nature could bear, to witness the too great success of her efforts to disfigure herself; at all events, the son of one of the most distinguished ladies of Lima, who, we suppose, remembered her former beauty, but was prevented by her seclusion from observing the effects of the red pepper and hot lime, asked her in marriage. "The proposal was very agreeable to her mother, who, having eleven children, as before mentioned, to provide for, was happy at the prospect of an alliance so advantageous to her daughter. But Rose had given her virginity to God; and having a perfect abhorrence of the very thought of marriage, openly declared that she would never consent. Threats and caresses were alike vain. Blows and injuries were heaped upon her by her parents, but with no other effect than to make her more constant in her resolutions. She bore them all as her model, St. Catherine of Sienna, had done before her."

"In order to defeat the machinations of the enemies of her purity, she resolved to put on the habit of the third order of St. Dominic. This determination was confirmed by two miracles." We think it enough to give one of them, merely remarking that the other was an event equally supernatural.

"In the vast plains of Lima, amidst the countless butterflies that flit to and fro in the sunshine of that lovely climate, there is one prettily marked with black and white, the colours of the order of St. Dominic. One of these insects came and fluttered continually around her, and, as she was then looking about for indications of the will of God, she took this to be a second intimation from him that she should again follow the steps of St. Catherine, and become a religious of the third order of St. Dominic. She received the habit solemnly, at the age of twenty, on the 10th day of August, 1606."

Having brought our story to this point, we would, before going further, make a few remarks on one of the lessons taught to the little girls for whom their parents buy these "sweet little penny books" of Mr. Duffy's.

It seems to be one of the essential points in the life of a female saint that she should, while still a child, make a vow of perpetual celibacy. St. Philomena, it will be remembered, made such a vow at the age of ten; St. Rose, being, we suppose, twice as virtuous, made her's at the age of five. Promises so made are treated as irrevocably binding; and a child who altogether sets at naught, and defies the wishes of her parents in this matter, is described as choosing to obey God rather than man. What is here told of St. Rose and St. Philomena is repeated, with variations, in nearly all the lives of female saints that we remember; and in these religious romances the parents of the heroine fill the part which is assigned to the villain of secular romances. Those who have addicted themselves to the study of the old school of novels, know that it was the heroine's fate, after having in early life given her heart to a youth in every way worthy of it, to be invariably pursued by the machinations of a villain, from whose arts she is only finally delivered near the end of the third volume. In these religious romances it is the parents of the heroine who are intended to excite the reader's alarm (if anything can alarm a reader experienced enough to know how all such stories end); with "threats and caresses, blows and injuries" they seek to drive her from her purpose, but in vain; and her successful resistance is, at length, rewarded by reception into some distinguished nunnery.

We are inclined to believe, in charity, that the good priests who are the authors of these stories, not having any families of their own, are led into error through their ignorance as to the class of ideas of which the mind of a child of five years old is capable. We scarcely think that they would represent promises as binding made by a person ignorant of the meaning of what he was promising, or of the value of what he was giving away. If, for example, a man should prevail on a young child to promise to give him an estate to which the child was entitled when it should come of age, such an engagement would not be considered by any one as binding. Now, if our readers will try the experiment with the next child of five years old they meet, we think they will find them likely to possess a much more accurate idea, even as to what is meant by giving away an estate, than as to what is meant by "consecrating to God their virgin purity and making a vow of perpetual celibacy."

But see how the thing works in practice. A Roman Catholic little girl (if entitled to property in her own right so much the better), is asked how she would like to be a nun. Perhaps she goes to a nun's school; at all events she can form no other idea of a nun than a lady wearing a peculiar grand dress, living in a fine house, and thought holier and better than everybody else. She comes to the conclusion that to be a nun would be a very charming thing, and she forms her childish resolution accordingly. If her parents have treated her to Mr. Duffy's little books, she reads in them that such a resolution as she has taken is *irrevocable*; that it is an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, not to be repented of without sacrilege. If her parents disapprove of her plans she is taught that it will be the highest exercise of Christian virtue to set their wishes at defiance. We recommend any of our Roman Catholic friends, who would be sorry that their children took up these ideas, to look well to the kind of instruction they are providing for them.

We must not omit to remark how opposed to God's law are the lessons thus taught by Mr. Duffy to the "Young Christians" of Ireland. All human laws follow the dictates of common sense in this matter, and do not permit minors to enter into engagements against the consent of their parents. And so, in like manner, in the laws given by God to the Jewish nation, vows made to God, by an unmarried female, are treated as invalid if contrary to the consent of her parents.—See Numbers xxx. 5., R.C. Bible. "But if her father, immediately as soon as he heard it, gainsay it, both her vows and her oaths shall be void, neither shall she be bound to what she promised, because her father hath gainsaid it." Here we see that Moses would have decided St. Rose's perplexity in the case "where it would seem that God commanded one thing and the parents another," in precisely the opposite way from that in which St. Rose decided it. The Jews, however, are blamed by our Lord for adding to the laws which Moses gave them, traditions of man's devising; and it is singular that this very com-